

SYEDI KHAWJ BIN MALAK ^{QS}
URUS- 06TH ZIL HIJJA, KAPADWANJ

Khawj b. Malak Kapadwanji (d.ca.1021/1612) - a Tayyibi Ismaili historian, scholar and senior dignitary in late 16th-century Mughal Gujarat, author of the well-known Sett Rasail.

One of Khawj b. Malak's most notable achievements is that of chronicling a perceptive, eyewitness account of his time centring around the 26th and 27th Tayyibi Daiss, Sayyedna Daud b. Ajabshah (d.997/1589) and Sayyedna Daud b. Qutubshah (d.1021/1612). He was a trusted and close confidant of both dais, who often summoned him to Ahmadabad from his hometown Kapadwanj, where he and his brothers were prosperous traders. He received extensive tutelage from both dais. His learning, loyalty, and forceful personality stood him in good stead when he was called upon to debate with dissenters from the community.

In his writing he shows a deep understanding of the politics, personalities, and social dynamics of his time. He throws new light on the relations and tensions between the 16th-century rulers of Gujarat and their subjects on a micro-level, highlighting the chaos of the early years of Mughal rule there. He views the liberal religious policies of the Mughal emperor Akbar (d.1014/1605) as having brought to the Tayyibi community much-needed respite from years of persecution, allowing it finally to practice its faith openly.

He underscores the continuity of belief and practice in his community, giving a valuable insight into community life, while recounting its resolute forbearance in the face of severe persecution from the Sunni sultans of Gujarat. Importantly, he details the circumstances surrounding the rival claim of Sulayman b. Hasan (d.1005/1597) to the dai-ship after the death of dai Daud b. Ajabshah, including his own imprisonment, along with other senior advisors of the dai Daud b. Qutubshah, by Shah Murad son of Akbar, then governor of Gujarat. When the dispute was taken by Sulayman to the court of Akbar, Khawj b. Malak accompanied dai Daud b. Qutubshah to Lahore, where Akbar gave the farman-i-khaqani in the latter's favour.

Khawj b. Malak's chronicles are also one of the main sources for the history of the establishment of the Fatimid dawa in India from the late eleventh century by Fatimid missionaries from Egypt. He also briefly deals with the dissent of Jafar Neherwali (d.845/1441) and the resulting persecution of the community by the sultans of Gujarat on his instigation. His forefathers six generations before him were Hindu converts. He performed the Hajj and lived in Mecca for three years. His tomb in Kapadwanj is revered to the present day. His chronicles have been accepted as an authoritative source of history of his period in the Daudi Bohra Tayyibi Ismaili community.